

Remarks (translated from original French)
by Burkina Faso's Minister of Finance and Budget
Jean-Baptiste Marie Pascal Campaore

Members of the Government, the Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Account, your Excellencies the Heads of the Diplomatic and Consular Missions, your Excellencies the Representatives of International and Inter-African Organizations, Members of Parliament, Religious and Customary authorities, Honorable Guests, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

First of all, allow me, in the name of the Burkinabe Government and people, to repeat our wishes for a warm welcome and a pleasant stay to Mr. Paul V. APPLEGARTH, CEO of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and to the entire delegation that is accompanying him to Burkina Faso.

Mr. Chief Executive Officer,

The ceremony that brings us together today is a red-letter day in the cooperative relationship between the United States of America and Burkina Faso.

In fact, the financing agreement for \$12.9 USD that we have just signed brings a new impulsion to direct bilateral cooperation between the United States and Burkina Faso, and I am certain that this cooperation will continue to become stronger in the future.

As you, Mr. Chief Executive Officer, have just stressed, the objective of this financing agreement is to support the Government's actions in the field of education and especially the education of young Burkinabe girls by implementing a special program over two years, which is going to increase, in quantity and quality, girls' access to education.

The objectives of the interim MCA program for Burkina Faso fit perfectly into the overall objectives of the governmental policy. Its performance will thus rely on partners of the Government in education, including basic communities. When one knows that education plays a very important role in the process of development and that it is one of the Government's priority sectors, one can only joyously celebrate this contribution that comes at an excellent time to reinforce the actions that have already been undertaken in recent years through the ten-year Program for developing basic education (PDDEB).

The PDDEB is one of the guiding programs of the Government , in which development (in 2001) and its implementation were rigorously executed with the partners for development in Burkina Faso; partners whom I wish to further express the gratitude of the Burkinabe Government and people. The PDDEB, in conformity with the objectives of the Strategic Framework of the Fight against Poverty (CSLP), developed in 2000 and regularly updated in collaboration with the technical and financial partners, must contribute to the fight against poverty with a view toward durable development.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that despite the efforts of the Government and its partners for developing education, the results recorded until the present remain very far from the objective of universal education in the Millennium - by 2015 - that was set by the international community. In fact, in Burkina Faso, only 57.1% of school-age children are actually now being educated.

This situation results from several factors but principally from the low level of education at the beginning of the Millennium (41.3% of the gross rate of school attendance in 2000), from the low revenues of the population, in which 46% live below the poverty line (which is 82,672 CFA francs, or less than 50 cents per days), and from the penury of the State's resources. The financing agreement that we have just signed will be able to ensure the encouragement of the girl's education, especially by an adequate policy for the free distribution of school supplies; a financial obligation that parents can not uphold to the detriment of these girls.

Mr. Chief Executive Officer,

As we all know, development is a global and multi-sectorial process. For that reason I would like, in the name of the Burkinabe Government and people, to ask you, upon your return to your country, to be the advocate for Burkina Faso to the American Authorities, with a view toward support for developing and implementing an important multi-sectorial program for durable development within the most expeditious timeframe.

Members of the Government, the Chief Executive Officer, your Excellencies the Heads of Diplomatic Missions, your Excellencies the Representatives of International and Inter-African Organizations, Members of Parliament, Religious and Customary authorities, Honorable Guests, Ladies, and Gentlemen.

Once again, in the name of the Burkinabe Government and people, I would like to reiterate our gratitude to all our development partners for their daily and continuous contributions and various efforts in the field of development, in the cities and countryside of Burkina Faso, in favor of the Government and the people.

I thank you.